

§ 301.51-9 Costs and charges.

The services of the inspector during normal business hours will be furnished without cost to persons requiring the services. The user will be responsible for all costs and charges arising from inspection and other services provided outside of normal business hours.

Done in Washington, DC, this 28th day of February 1997.

Terry L. Medley,

Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 97-5518 Filed 3-6-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

Agricultural Marketing Service**7 CFR Part 925**

[Docket No. FV96-925-1 FIR]

Grapes Grown in a Designated Area of Southeastern California; Assessment Rate

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The Department of Agriculture (Department) is adopting as a final rule, without change, the provisions of an interim final rule establishing an assessment rate for the California Desert Grape Administrative Committee (Committee) under Marketing Order No. 925 for the 1997 and subsequent fiscal years. The Committee is responsible for local administration of the marketing order which regulates the handling of table grapes grown in a designated area of southeastern California. Authorization to assess grape handlers enables the Committee to incur expenses that are reasonable and necessary to administer the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Tershirra T. Yeager, Program Assistant, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, room 2525-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456, telephone (202) 720-5127, FAX (202) 720-5698 or Rose Aguayo, Marketing Specialist, California Marketing Field Office, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, 2202 Monterey Street, suite 102B, Fresno, California 93721, telephone (209) 487-5901, FAX (209) 487-5906. Small businesses may request information on compliance with this regulation by contacting: Jay Guerber, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, room

2525-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456, telephone (202) 720-2491, FAX (202) 720-5698.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This rule is issued under Marketing Agreement and Order No. 925 (7 CFR part 925) regulating the handling of table grapes grown in a designated area of southeastern California, hereinafter referred to as the "order." The marketing agreement and order are effective under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937, as amended (7 U.S.C. 601-674), hereinafter referred to as the "Act."

The Department of Agriculture (Department) is issuing this rule in conformance with Executive Order 12866.

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12988, Civil Justice Reform. Under the order now in effect, California table grape handlers are subject to assessments. Funds to administer the order are derived from such assessments. It is intended that the assessment rate as issued herein will be applicable to all assessable grapes beginning January 1, 1997, and continuing until amended, suspended, or terminated. This rule will not preempt any State or local laws, regulations, or policies, unless they present an irreconcilable conflict with this rule.

The Act provides that administrative proceedings must be exhausted before parties may file suit in court. Under section 608c(15)(A) of the Act, any handler subject to an order may file with the Secretary a petition stating that the order, any provision of the order, or any obligation imposed in connection with the order is not in accordance with law and request a modification of the order or to be exempted therefrom. Such handler is afforded the opportunity for a hearing on the petition. After the hearing the Secretary would rule on the petition. The Act provides that the district court of the United States in any district in which the handler is an inhabitant, or has his or her principal place of business, has jurisdiction to review the Secretary's ruling on the petition, provided an action is filed not later than 20 days after the date of the entry of the ruling.

Pursuant to requirements set forth in the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA), the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has considered the economic impact of this rule on small entities.

The purpose of the RFA is to fit regulatory actions to the scale of business subject to such actions in order that small businesses will not be unduly or disproportionately burdened.

Marketing orders issued pursuant to the Act, and the rules issued thereunder, are unique in that they are brought about through group action of essentially small entities acting on their own behalf. Thus, both statutes have small entity orientation and compatibility.

There are approximately 80 producers of table grapes in the production area and approximately 20 handlers subject to regulation under the marketing order. Small agricultural producers have been defined by the Small Business Administration (13 CFR 121.601) as those having annual receipts less than \$500,000, and small agricultural service firms are defined as those whose annual receipts are less than \$5,000,000. The majority of table grape producers and handlers are not classified as small entities.

The table grape marketing order provides authority for the Committee, with the approval of the Department, to formulate an annual budget of expenses and collect assessments from handlers to administer the program. The members of the Committee are producers and handlers of California desert grapes. They are familiar with the Committee's needs and with the costs for goods and services in their local area and are thus in a position to formulate an appropriate budget and assessment rate. The assessment rate is formulated and discussed in a public meeting. Thus, all directly affected persons have an opportunity to participate and provide input.

The Committee met on December 3, 1996, and unanimously recommended 1997 expenditures of \$156,865 and an assessment rate of \$0.01 per lug of table grapes. In comparison, last year's budgeted expenditures were \$114,827. The Committee recommended not to have an assessment rate for the 1996 fiscal year because there was adequate money in the reserve to cover estimated expenses. Major expenditures recommended by the Committee for the 1997 year include \$100,000 for research, \$25,000 for compliance purposes, and \$8,675 for the manager's salary. Budgeted expenses for these items in 1996 were \$60,000 for research, \$25,000 for the sheriff's patrol and \$7,887 for the manager's salary.

The assessment rate recommended by the Committee was derived by dividing anticipated expenses by expected shipments of California table grapes. Table grape shipments for the year are estimated at 8,000,000 lugs which should provide \$80,000 in assessment income. Income derived from handler assessments, along with interest income and funds from the Committee's authorized reserve, will be adequate to

cover budgeted expenses. Funds in the reserve will be kept within the maximum permitted by the order.

An interim final rule regarding this action was published January 17, 1997, issue of the Federal Register (62 FR 2547). That rule provided for a 30-day comment period. No comments were received.

While this rule will impose additional costs on handlers, the costs are in the form of uniform assessments on all handlers. Some of the additional costs may be passed on to producers.

However, these costs will be offset by the benefits derived by the operation of the marketing order. Therefore, the AMS has determined that this rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities.

The assessment rate established in this rule will continue in effect indefinitely unless modified, suspended, or terminated by the Secretary upon recommendation and information submitted by the Committee or other available information.

Although this assessment rate is effective for an indefinite period, the Committee will continue to meet prior to or during each fiscal year to recommend a budget of expenses and consider recommendations for modification of the assessment rate. The dates and times of Committee meetings are available from the Committee or the Department. Committee meetings are open to the public and interested persons may express their views at these meetings. The Department will evaluate Committee recommendations and other available information to determine whether modification of the assessment rate is needed. Further rulemaking will be undertaken as necessary. The Committee's 1997 budget and those for subsequent fiscal years will be reviewed and, as appropriate, approved by the Department.

After consideration of all relevant material presented, including the information and recommendation submitted by the Committee and other available information, it is hereby found that this rule, as hereinafter set forth, will tend to effectuate the declared policy of the Act.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553, it is also found and determined that good cause exists for not postponing the effective date of this rule until 30 days after publication in the Federal Register because: (1) The Committee needs to have sufficient funds to pay its expenses which are incurred on a continuous basis; (2) the 1997 fiscal year began on January 1, 1997, and the marketing order requires that the rate of

assessment for each fiscal year apply to all assessable table grapes handled during such fiscal year;

(3) handlers are aware of this action which was unanimously recommended by the Committee at a public meeting and is similar to other assessment rate actions issued in past years; and (4) an interim final rule was published on this action and provided a 30-day comment period, no comments were received.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 925

Grapes, Marketing agreements, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, 7 CFR part 925 is amended as follows:

PART 925—GRAPES GROWN IN A DESIGNATED AREA OF SOUTHEASTERN CALIFORNIA

Accordingly, the interim final rule amending 7 CFR part 925 which was published at 62 FR 2547 on January 17, 1997, is adopted as a final rule without change.

Dated: March 3, 1997.

Robert C. Keeney,

Director, Fruit and Vegetable Division.

[FR Doc. 97-5589 Filed 3-6-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-02-P

7 CFR Part 959

[Docket No. FV96-959-1 FIR]

Onions Grown in South Texas; Assessment Rate

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The Department of Agriculture (Department) is adopting as a final rule, without change, the provisions of an interim final rule establishing an assessment rate for the South Texas Onion Committee (Committee) under Marketing Order No. 959 for the 1996-97 and subsequent fiscal periods. The Committee is responsible for local administration of the marketing order which regulates the handling of onions grown in South Texas. Authorization to assess Texas onion handlers enables the Committee to incur expenses that are reasonable and necessary to administer the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 1, 1996.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Belinda G. Garza, Marketing Specialist, McAllen Marketing Field Office, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA,

1313 East Hackberry, McAllen, TX 78501, telephone 210-682-2833; FAX 210-682-5942, or Martha Sue Clark, Program Assistant, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, room 2525-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456, telephone 202-720-9918; FAX 202-720-5698. Small businesses may request information on compliance with this regulation by contacting: Jay Guerber, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, room 2525-S, Washington, DC 20090-6456; telephone 202-720-2491; FAX 202-720-5698.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This rule is issued under Marketing Agreement No. 143 and Order No. 959, both as amended (7 CFR part 959), regulating the handling of onions grown in South Texas, hereinafter referred to as the "order." The marketing agreement and order are effective under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937, as amended (7 U.S.C. 601-674), hereinafter referred to as the "Act."

The Department is issuing this rule in conformance with Executive Order 12866.

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12988, Civil Justice Reform. Under the marketing order now in effect, South Texas onion handlers are subject to assessments. It is intended that the assessment rate as issued herein will be applicable to all assessable onions beginning August 1, 1996, and continuing until amended, suspended, or terminated. This rule will not preempt any State or local laws, regulations, or policies unless they present an irreconcilable conflict with this rule.

The Act provides that administrative proceedings must be exhausted before parties may file suit in court. Under section 608c(15)(A) of the Act, any handler subject to an order may file with the Secretary a petition stating that the order, any provision of the order, or any obligation imposed in connection with the order is not in accordance with law and request a modification of the order or to be exempted therefrom. Such handler is afforded the opportunity for a hearing on the petition. The Act provides that the District court of the United States in any district in which the handler is an inhabitant, or has his or her principal place of business, has jurisdiction to review the Secretary's ruling on the petition, provided an action is filed not later than 20 days after the date of the entry of the ruling.

Pursuant to requirements set forth in the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA), the